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## Correspondence.

ART NEWS FROM LONDON.—NO. 1.

LONDON, March 23, 1855.

THE London Art season—the season of the annual picture exhibitions—begins with the opening of the British Institution on the first Monday in February, and closes with the shutting of the Royal Academy Gallery at the end of July. It is now, therefore, like the spring season itself, in a state of half-matured growth—flowering in one or two instances, preparing to bud in more.

Such of your readers as have visited London will know, and many more will be able to guess, the general tone of our exhibition. The terms in which I can describe it are not, I regret to say, complimentary. Extreme mental poverty and inanity of subject in the departments where imagination is concerned. One set of artists “do the domestic” in a prettified sentimental, another in a mindless literal way. Some two per cent. of the works exhibited may be of the historic or religious sort—both shams; a foolish parade of costume and theatricality in the first, of threadbare tradition in the second. The chorister-boy and charity-girl humbug, initiated by Mr. Barraud, still ontstares you with its idiocies. The *genre* is often clever, seldom valuable: the Gil Blas and Vicar of Wakefield section has dwindled down, fortunately, to almost nothing. The school of portrait, scarcely represented at all, save at the Royal Academy and the Society of British Artists, is of the lowest degradation, the handmaid of vacant vanity, the thrall of vapid external-boasting, however, one or two able professors, hardly a single deep one. The landscape is, in a great degree, sound as regards love of the Nature represented, vivid perception, careful observation, and ease of rendering; but it is limited in range, and wretchedly self-repeating—many men of talent going on year after year doing the same effect, or the same incident, or the same scenery, over and over again, till what was at first a real impulsive insight into the heart of the thing, becomes a foolish mechanism, paid for at so much the yard. In all classes of subjects, an eye for color is more or less visible, as a general rule—inartificial on the whole, and often inartistic into the bargain, but far superior in freshness and vivacity to what is found in the continental schools, the severer form of whose corpse-like academicism we have also been saved from, partly by better feeling, partly by ignorance. Sculpture, tolerably skillful, but weak and palsy-stricken, appears, one may say, nowhere except at the Academy; architecture scarcely even there. A separate exhibition of the last Art, started some years ago, has revived this season after an interval, displays not much of value, but indicates a hope of better things.

Your readers will understand that I have been speaking merely of the ordinary level of our Art. Individual instances of a higher order might be quoted, and are thankfully allowed; but that is a separate affair.

Beneficent Pre-Raphaelitism is gradually working a change in the tenor of our pictorial doings. Let there be no mistake about what Pre-Raphaelitism means. It

has nothing to do with the technical deficiencies, or technical practice, or choice of subjects, of painters who lived before Raphael, but with the condition of mind which actuated them to represent whatever was in hand—whether typically or naturally—with a resolute adherence to truth of feeling and truth of fact, and a resolute disregard of all mere grace and all mere dexterity which would interfere with the first or affect the second. Pre-Raphaelitism, at its lowest, is reverent faith in Nature, whether seen with the poet's eye or the catalogue-compiler's, whether rendered with the artist's hand or with the transcriber's. At its highest—and the young men who founded the school understood it at its highest—this faith in Nature takes a far wider range; involving that sincerity of thought which shall always invent something specific and something new in conception—something truly natural in idea, as well as express this through a medium of visible nature studied with that love of observance which cannot but catch, out of her infinity, beauties ever fresh and individual. Of the two calumnies which have borne testimony to the extent of alarm created by Pre-Raphaelitism among its opponents—namely, that it imitates the defects of old painters, such as false perspective, and that it copies *anything* in Nature, without purpose or meaning, instead of first getting a worthy subject, and then selecting the right Nature for its realization—the one is not more monstrous than the other. But these calumnies are getting stale, and hardly serve their turn any longer. Thinkers and good painters have hailed Pre-Raphaelitism from the first, and even academy students are influenced by it now. It was only the other day that the assertion of such futile fallacies as I have alluded to entailed a volley of hisses upon Mr. Hart, the recently elected Professor of Painting at the Royal Academy, when he delivered his first lecture: an expression of opinion unprecedented, I am given to understand, in the institution.

Pre-Raphaelitism, as I said, is working its way in our exhibitions. Bad painters try on a delusive imitation of it like an ill-fitting suit of clothes; promising men serve in its cause; and even the inferior minds who adopt it in good faith, are redeemed from mere inanity by its practice, and progress with the successive years. It now forms quite a class in every gallery—felt not only by its distinctness, but by its numbers.

Two of the picture-exhibitions are now open: the British Institution, established many years, managed by a committee of noblemen and gentlemen, patronized now much less than formerly by royal academicians and associates; and the National Institution, youngest of the lot, whose principle is, that each exhibiting artist, after getting his work approved by the directing body, also artists, pays for the space where it is to hang, and so saves himself all heartburnings on the score of having been unfairly treated in that respect by envious rivals. The experiment of free admission to the public was tried for some years at this gallery, but failed. At the British Institution there are three pictures which I think worth specifying. Mr. H. Mark Anthony, long a member of

the Society of British Artists, but recently seceded, is, to my judgment, by far the greatest of our living landscape-painters. Still young, he has been an indefatigable worker; producing, year by year, till within the last three or four, his dozen or score of exhibited pictures. Massive force, instant grasp and realization of his subject, are his great characteristics. He is never afraid of anything; but loads his canvas with daring execution, and space after space of the intensest color. This was his original and most distinctive manner; but so deep an observer of nature could not help seeing the excellences of Pre-Raphaelite practice, and he has latterly engrafted a good deal of that system as his own—producing fewer pictures, more minutely elaborated, but on the whole, I am inclined to think, less noble in their impression. His “Wood-yard, Evening”—the picture at the British Institution—a cottage scene with a sky of unusual importance and beauty, is about the completest example of his present combined style. The second painting is a view from an elevated site of our metropolitan suburban village, Hampstead, by Mr. Ford Madox Brown—a thoroughly Pre-Raphaelite work; the painter being one who, preceding Millais and his colleagues by a few years, had realized some of the principles of the sect before Pre-Raphaelitism was a word known to man. The third is by an Englishman, who was a backwoodsman in your own America some years ago—Mr. Glass—and is not the first in which he has shown a singular vigor and aptitude of feeling in the representation of some stern horseman and fighter—a borderer, in this case, of the disturbed feud days between England and Scotland—riding to fierce deeds by moonlight. At the National Institution, the principal subject is an incident of the American War—the Battle of Stone Ferry—painted, however, to record Scottish valor, and by a Scotchman, Mr. McLan. “In the summer of the year 1779”—as the event is narrated—“a party of the 71st regiment (Fraser Highlanders) consisting of 56 men and 5 officers, was detached from a redoubt at Stone Ferry, in South Carolina, for the purpose of reconnoitering the enemy. They fell in with a strong column of the enemy (upwards of 2,000), and, instead of retreating, according to instruction, they thought proper to attack. They were nearly destroyed; all the officers and non-commissioned officers were killed or wounded, and seven of the privates only remained on their legs at the end of the combat. The commanding-officer fell, and, in falling, desired the few who still resisted, to make the best of their way to the redoubt. They did not obey; national honor did not permit them to leave their officer in the field; and they actually persisted in covering their fallen comrades, until a reinforcement, arriving from headquarters, induced the enemy to retire.” The picture is a laudable one of its class. Another is by a young lady, the daughter of William and Mary Howitt—names as well known in America as in England—and herself the authoress of a vivid and picturesque book, “The Art Student in Munich.” The subject is from Shelley's “Sensitive Plant,” treated with more poetical completeness than reference to the means of pictorial effect. The lady of the poem is shown, living in one oval compart-

ment of the picture—dead in the other; each being surrounded by a wreath of flowers and foliage painted on a much larger scale than the subjects, the first displaying all the beauties of the garden in its prime, the second all its weeds and foulness in decay—

"Prickly, and pulpos, and blistering, and blue,  
Livid, and starred with a lurid dew."

Much sweetness, and a thorough conscientious faithfulness, shine over the whole picture; the method partakes both of Pre-Raphaelitism and of Germanism.—The artist remaining most worthy of mention is Mr. William Bell Scott, brother of a deceased painter of genius, David Scott, and a noble poet, as a small volume recently published, together with some previous productions, will show. He has benefited very noticeably by Pre-Raphaelitism in his art as a painter. His "Albert Durer in Nuremberg" conjures up a fresh and living vision of the old German city; and a picture of one of our own northerly towns, Hedham, presenting both an interior, and a view of the street through the window, does the same for the kind of stolid, slow-going, yet bustling business which belongs to an English market-town.

Another exhibition now open here is that of the Glasgow Art Union. This Society, unlike its London sister, adopts the sensible plan of having the prize pictures chosen by a committee, instead of each prize-holder for himself, but the judgment which presides over the choice is only ordinary. How vast a benefit it would be to good Art and to the public, if the choice were delegated to some single man, the most competent of the day—say to John Ruskin. The engraving for the present year—worth commercially a great deal more than the guinea subscribed—is after Frith's clever picture, "Coming of Age in the Olden Time;" the chief prize, of £400, is by Mr. Saul, an artist of just that order of sentiment and technical skill which everybody can appreciate, and consequently one of the most popular men of the day. Has the print of his infant Samuel penetrated across the Atlantic? The London Art Union bestows on its subscribers two works that have just been issued: a fine engraving from a brilliant and festive picture by the lately deceased J. J. Chalon—whom the English press had an ignorant knack of vilifying while he was alive—and a volume of wood-cut illustrations to "Childe Harold"—a few very superior, some vile, as designs, but almost all ably engraved. John Tenniel, the successor of Doyle, in illustrating *Punch*, contributes the best. An extensive exhibition of Mexican antiquities is also open, and attracts considerable notice; while, of forthcoming displays, we have a gallery of pictures to be shortly opened in aid of the Patriotic Fund for the relief of relatives of our fighters in the Russian war; a promised Indian Court, in addition to the others at the Crystal Palace; and the contributions of our artists to the Paris Exhibition. I know of some good ones, and can surmise many others; but I suspect the representation of our school will be some way off completeness. However, Mr. Henry Cole, so well known in connection with our Exhibition of 1851, and now at the head of the Government

Department of Science and Art, Dr. Playfair, his colleague, and Mr. Redgrave, the painter and Art-Superintendent of the same institution, in a report which they have recently presented, hope "that, on the whole, a just and ample display of the Fine Art of the United Kingdom has been obtained," admitting, at the same time, "that, while some artists invited to contribute have neglected to do so, there are cases where others are not so fully represented as desirable, because their works could not be obtained," and that "it is also possible that much talent has been unavoidably overlooked." It will be understood that the works transmitted are not necessarily new ones; on the contrary, such as have been previously exhibited, seem to have obtained a preference, and proprietors have come forward liberally in lending them for the occasion. They are insured for upwards of £130,000. The works of artists deceased before June, 1853, are not admitted.

Art has sustained two losses by death within the last few weeks. Copley Fielding, the President of the Old Society of Painters in Water-Colors, has died in his sixty-ninth year. His works will be found fully characterized, and that with no small degree of praise, in occasional notices throughout the first volume of Ruskin's "Modern Painters." Storms at sea, and views over our Sussex downs, treated at times with an approach to the aspect of Italian scenery, were what he produced most systematically; latterly with more of mannerism than of accurate Nature, although his fine qualities continued to appear at intervals. I understand that, during the closing years of his life, he painted professedly for money—which rewarded his search freely—not for fame. If one may speculate as to his successor in the Water-Color Presidency, I should be inclined to name Cattermole, famous for feudal scenes, barons and retainers, knights and ladies, and crumbling castle walls and drawbridges. The most noble of water-color painters is assuredly William Hunt, the poet of bird's nests, primrose-banks, and country boys and girls; but, I presume he has no chance—probably, no desire. A German artist, Carl Haag, also, is very popular at court. The second death is that of John Hollins, an associate of the Royal Academy, who had not passed middle age. He was known for coast scenes, fish-boats, and portraits, but was not an artist who can rightly be called eminent.

Two elections at the Royal Academy have also taken place. On the 12th February, Mr. Samuel Cousins was elected an academicien, being the first engraver in whose behalf the regulation coeval with the academy itself, whereby engravers could only aspire to the rank of associates, has been extended. That regulation has long been pronounced by influential persons, illiberal. Yet I confess that, till the academy shall be wholly re-constituted so as to recognize the claims of sculptors, architects, and others, practically as well as theoretically, in proportion to those of painters, I feel very much disposed to the illiberal side. Engravers, who certainly cannot, as such, like painters, sculptors, and architects, aspire to the rank of inventors, had a distinct status in the academy, involving, as far as I can see, no de-

gradation, and whereby the claims of the most eminent in a subordinate department of Art were recognized. If the present full election of engravers is to trench upon the seats open to other artists, the wrong appears to me greater than the advantage; but, I fancy this is not to be the case. The other new academicien is Mr. E. M. Ward, elected on the 14th March—a painter of considerable power in the delineation of character, who has done several greatly-applauded works in biographical and historical *genre*—Dr. Johnson reading the MS. of the "Vicar of Wakefield," Defoe offering the MS. of "Robinson Crusoe" for sale, the "Fall of Clarendon," "Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette in the Temple Prison," the "Execution of Montrose," &c. There is a tendency in Mr. Ward to the coarse and theatrical; but he is a man of ability and a talented artist, as well as one of the most popular of the day. Mr. Ward's name is much about at present through another circumstance also; that of his having appealed to a police-court for any protection the law may be able to afford him in the matter of a counterfeit which he has discovered of one of his pictures. The case has brought the general subject of artistic genuineness into prominence; but it seems that no valid remedy exists at present, and the chief suggestion offered is, that painters should obtain a governmental registration of each picture as they produce it.

As regards immediate public interest, all the matters I have spoken of are secondary. The rage of the day is the sale of the Bernal collection; consisting of porcelain, arms and armors, watches and clocks, eighteenth century cabinet-work, and nicknacks of all sorts, among which not the most thought of are the paintings and miniatures, which were bought by their late owner rather for antiquarian interest in the illustration of costume than for strict artistic value. Mr. Bernal, Chairman of Committee in the House of Commons, was a shrewd collector of such things, and had the pick of the market; and his acquisitions are now fetching prices often ten, twenty, or thirty times as large as he gave for them. The sums are, indeed, in many cases, out of all proportion to the value—the real good sense value—of the objects; but virtuosi are an irresponsible race, with a standard of taste and value all their own. Government, which had, not imprudently or stingily, refused to buy the collection *en masse* at an appraised price of £50,000, is, nevertheless, a large purchaser of individual objects for the Museum of Ornamental Art. Unluckily, it is rumored that the British Museum also is buying, and that such a thing has happened as that the one national purchaser bids against the other, and sends up the hardly secured lot to an absurd price; surely, if true, a miserable folly and want of organization. Another sale which took place a few weeks ago was memorable as comprising a noble Turner, "The Lock," engraved in the "Liber Studiorum," a Constable, under the same title, which brought a higher price than the Turner, and the "Fleur de Lys," one of Etty's latest works, and of the finest belonging to that period of his practice. This picture—quite a small one—had sold at the enormous figure of one thousand guineas some

three years back; it now realized seven hundred—no trifle either.

I shall not give you much news of what is to be at our forthcoming Royal Academy Exhibition—always the great public artistic event of the year; and this, for more reasons than one. I don't know very much about it myself as yet; and artists are not over partial to having their intentions bruited about beforehand. I may say, however, that Millais is to have a remarkable subject of our actual London life—possibly, but not probably, a second picture; and Wm. Holman Hunt, who has been for some while in the East, promises an oriental subject. Egg also will exhibit a work that has long been looked for. Ford, Brown and Anthony, are expected to strengthen the representation of the Pre-Raphaelite school; together with Inchbold, a young landscape-painter of the most assured promise, Miss Howitt, and others, whose names America has yet to learn. By the bye, she carried off, some years ago, a young artist, Mr. Telfer, who would probably by this time have joined the Pre-Raphaelite movement, like most of the aspirants with a gleam of originality, and of whom I should be glad to hear any good news.

Of recent books connected with Art, we have had a *Life of Etty*, by Alexander Gilchrist—a work of great interest, setting the character of that remarkable genius in a clear and honorable light, and stocked with acute reflection and (rare merit!) appreciative criticism on Art by the author; a *Life of Velazquez*, re-written from Stirling's Biographies of the Spanish artists; a *Life of Strange the engraver*, by Mr. Dennistoun, who died as the book was on the eve of publication; and a further pamphlet from Mr. D. R. Hay, in which his theory of the assimilation of harmonic proportion of form to harmonic proportion of sound is applied to Gothic architecture. The strongest artistic interest attaches to another book, the preparations for which have been pending for some time, and which may probably come out towards the end of the year. This is an illustrated edition of Tennyson's miscellaneous poems. The Pre-Raphaelites will have a considerable share in it. Hunt is likely to do the *Lady of Shalott*; Millais the *Miller's Daughter*, *Mariana*; *Dora*, *St. Agnes*; *Dante Rossetti*, the *Vision of Sin*, *Sir Galahad*. Artists of other parties also will contribute. *Maclise* is down for the *Mort Arthur*; *Landseer* for *Godiva*; *Horsley* for the *May Queen*; *Stanfield* for *Ulysses* and "*Break, break, break!*"—that pang of glorious lyric pathos; *Creswick* for *Claribel*. There is a prospect that a portrait of Tennyson will appear as the frontispiece, to be engraved from a medallion by Thomas Woolner—a young sculptor of intellect and imagination—strange phenomenon at the present day—who contemplates to renovate sculpture in his own practice, upon the same principles of earnestness and truth which the Pre-Raphaelites have imposed upon public recognition in painting, and who has produced, in the medallion in question, a work admirable at once for its Art, and its portraiture of the great original.

WILLIAM M. ROSSETTI.

March 23, 1855.

ENGLISH COOKERY.—I have now had experience enough to tell you something about English cookery. In this point also the practical spirit of the nation manifests itself. All articles of daily food, bread, meat, fish, are most excellent in their kind, and dressed in a plain natural manner, which permits the peculiar taste of each to be developed in perfection. The English roast beef rises like a grand primeval feature in these our modern times. In the interior of these mountains of flesh are invitations to the organs of taste, by which I felt my comprehension of the state of things described by Homer very much promoted. Thus I now, for the first time, clearly understood the extent of the enjoyment of Telamon's noble son, when Agamemnon, after his glorious combat with Hector, honors him with the mighty chine. There is also something very respectable in the celebrated, and truly excellent national dish, the plum pudding. It forcibly calls to mind the petrified fluid mass, the conglomerate of the mountains, aptly called pudding-stone. It is likewise a symbol of the English language, in which the flower very properly represents the German, and the plums the French part. Such *pièces de résistance* are, however, both the characteristic and the best part of English cookery. In the more refined parts, the invention of their culinary fancy is neither rich nor happy, and is nowise to be compared to the French, who, in the lighter arabesque style, have indisputably attained the acme of glory. But he who understands the pleasures of gastronomy, is nowhere better off than at the table of the great; for there the simple normal strength of English cookery is most happily combined with the refined and graceful coquetties of the French.—*Dr. Waagen.*

ALL science and all art may be divided into that which is subservient to life, and which is the object of it. As subservient to life, or practical, their results are, in the common sense of the word, useful. As the object of life or theoretic, they are, in the common sense, useless; and yet, the step between practical and theoretic science, is the step between the miner and the geologist, the apothecary and the chemist; and the step between practical and theoretic art, is that between the bricklayer and the architect, between the plumber and the artist, and this is a step allowed on all hands to be from less to greater; so that the so-called useless part of each profession does, by the authoritative and right instinct of mankind, assume the superior and more noble place, even though books be sometimes written, and that by writers of no ordinary mind, which assume that a chemist is rewarded for the years of toil which have traced the greater part of the combinations of matter to their ultimate atoms, by discovering a cheap way of refining sugar, and date the eminence of the philosopher, whose life has been spent in the investigation of the laws of light, from the time of his inventing an improvement in spectacles.

But the common consent of men proves and accepts the proposition, that whatever part of any pursuit ministers to the bodily comforts, and admits of material uses, is ignoble; and whatsoever part is addressed to the mind only, is noble; and that geology does better in reclothing dry bones and revealing lost creations than in tracing veins of lead and beds of iron; astronomy better in opening to us the houses of heaven than in teaching navigation; botany better in displaying structure than in expressing pieces; surgery better in investigating organization than in setting limbs; only it is ordained that, for our encouragement, every step we make in the more exalted range of science adds something also to its practical applicabilities; that all the great phenomena of nature, the knowledge of which is desired by the angels only, by us partly, as it reveals to further vision the being and the glory of Him in whom they rejoice and

we live, dispense yet such kind influences, and so much of material blessing as to be joyfully felt by all inferior creatures, and to be desired by them with such single desire as the imperfection of their nature may admit; that the strong torrents which, in their own gladness, fill the hills with hollow thunder and the vales with winding light, have yet their bounden charge of field to feed, and barge to bear; that the fierce flames to which the Alp owes its upheaval and the volcano its terror, temper for us the metal vein and quickening spring; and that for our incitement, I say not our reward, for knowledge is its own reward, herbs have their healing, stones their preciousness, and stars their times.

Now the mere animal consciousness of the pleasantness I call æsthesis; but the exulting, reverent and grateful perception of it I call theoria. For this, and this only, is the full comprehension and contemplation of the Beautiful as a gift of God, a gift not necessary to our being, but added to, and elevating it, and twofold, first of the desire, and secondly of the thing desired.

But the Christian theoria seeks not, though it accepts, and touches with its own purity, what the Epicurean sought, but finds its food and the objects of its love everywhere, in what is harsh and fearful, as well as what is kind; nay, even in all that seems coarse and commonplace; seizing that which is good, and delighting more sometimes at finding its table spread in strange places, and in the presence of its enemies, and its honey coming out of the rock, than if all were harmonized into a less wondrous pleasure, hating only what is self-sighted and insolent of men's work; despising all that is not of God, unless reminding it of God, yet able to find evidence of him still, where all seems forgetful of him, and to turn that into a witness of his working which was meant to obscure it, and so with clear and unoffended sight beholding him for ever, according to the written promise—"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."—*Modern Painters.*

MAN's use and function (and let him who will not grant me this follow me no further, for this I purpose always to assume) is to be the witness of the glory of God, and to advance that glory by his reasonable obedience and resultant happiness. Whatever enables us to fulfill this function is, in the pure and first sense of the word, useful to us—pre-eminently, therefore, whatever sets the glory of God more brightly before us. But things that only help us to exist, are, in a secondary and mean sense, useful, or rather, if they be looked for alone, they are useless and worse, for it would be better that we should not exist, than that we should guiltily disappoint the purposes of existence. And yet people speak in this working age, when they speak from their hearts, as if houses, and lands, and food, and raiment, were alone useful, and as if sight, thought, and admiration, were all profitless, so that men insolently call themselves Utilitarians, who would turn, if they had their way, themselves and their race into vegetables; men who think, as far as such can be said to think, that the meat is more than the life, and the raiment than the body, who to the earth as a stable, and to its fruit as fodder, vine-dressers and husbandmen, who love the corn they grind, and the grapes they crush, better than the gardens of the angels upon the slopes of Eden; hewers of wood and drawers of water, who think that the wood they hew and the water they draw, are better than the pine forests that cover the mountains like the shadow of God, and than the great rivers that move like his eternity. And so comes upon us that woe of the preacher, that though God "hath made everything beautiful in his time, also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end."—*Modern Painters.*